

No let-up in illegal stone extraction

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Illegal stone extraction continues unchecked in Sylhet not only at the cost of human lives, but also environment.

According to media reports, more than 50 workers were killed at illegal stone pits in the district from 2017 to now.

Bholaganj, Shah Arefin Tila, Kalairag, Lilaibazar and Utmachaara areas of Companiganj upazila; Bichnakandi and Sreepur areas of Gowainghat upazila and Lohachhara river belt of Kanaighat upazila are some of the key sites where this illegal practice continues.

Not even Jafong, once a popular tourist destination with river, hills and hillocks, and an ecologically critical area, is spared.

Some unscrupulous businessmen, allegedly in collusion with the local administration and ruling party men, are extracting stones in these areas using machines such as excavators, in complete violation of the High Court verdict and relevant laws, said locals and activists.

As the administration along with police, BGB and Department of Environment (DoE) is conducting drives at the sites, traders are now carrying out their activities mostly at night.

They are not even sparing the rivers -- Piyain, Gowain, Dhalai and Lohachhara, said activists.

Power pumps rumbling on the sandbars in the rivers, hundreds of people busy around wells dug with excavators, trucks waiting on the banks, boats anchored at a distance for extracting stones from the riverbed and transporting those -- such has become the situation there.

Besides, cases filed over stone extraction have seen little to no progress as many ruling party men are involved, activists alleged.

According to DoE, five cases are progressing in Sylhet court, filed over extracting stone illegally in Shah Arefin Tila area. Another one is waiting to be recorded.

There are also some other cases filed over the illegal practice in Companiganj and Gowainghat upazilas.



Once abuzz with nature-lovers, Jafong now lies ravaged. Stone traders have turned the popular tourist destination, especially the banks of Piyain river, into a mining site. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

On February 14, DoE submitted charge sheet to a Sylhet court in a case filed against Shamim Ahmed, president of Paschim Islampur union unit of Awami League, and 21 others over extracting stones in an illegal operation at Shah Arefin Tila in Companiganj. DoE filed the case on November 7, 2017 after death of six workers.

Shamim is contesting the upcoming upazila election as an independent candidate after not getting nomination from Awami League.

He is son of Companiganj upazila Chairman Abdul Bashir and brother of Zila Parishad member Joynal Abedin.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bapa, Sylhet, alleged, "Many ruling party men are behind illegal stone extraction."

"The High Court in a recent verdict said river encroachers cannot run in any elections,

in an effort to save rivers from greedy grabbers. But it's a matter of shame that some of these men in Sylhet are contesting the upazila polls," Kim said.

In Sylhet, the ruling party nominated Jaintiapur upazila AL's general secretary Liaquat Ali for the upazila polls. Liaquat is allegedly involved in extracting stones illegally in Gowainghat and Jaintiapur upazilas.

When asked, Liaquat denied the allegations. Advocate Shah Shaheda Akhter, regional coordinator of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela) in Sylhet, said, "DoE filed some cases in the last couple of years to avoid criticism, but the cases are in primary stage."

Over the years, Bela filed several writ petitions with the HC to stop illegal stone

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Questionable elections hurt democracy

Says EC Mahbub Talukder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner (EC) Mahbub Talukder yesterday said questionable elections are harmful to democracy.

"No nation can stand with self-respect in front of the world with questionable democracy," Mahbub said at a training

programme for returning and assistant returning officers of third phase of upazila parishad election.

The training programme was held at Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital's Agargaon area. Election Commission on February 14 announced the third-phase upazila polls schedule, setting March 24 as the voting day.

He said that the upazila parishad election has lost its appeal as a major opposition party is not participating.

Election should be held in a free, fair and acceptable way, regardless of the political situation in the country, Mahbub said.

He also asked election officials to ensure security for voters and inspire them to go to polling centres on election day.

At the same programme, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nurul Huda said this upazila election will be competitive. This the first time the election is being

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

NEWS IN brief

CU takes punitive steps against 16 students

CU CORRESPONDENT

The authorities of Chittagong University (CU) yesterday took punitive actions against its 16 students for breaching discipline.

Of them, 13 students were suspended for different periods on various charges, certificates of two were withheld for giving proxy in an exam and studentship of one was cancelled for cheating.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury took the decision following recommendation of the university's board of residence health and disciplinary

Conference on SDG held at UIU

CITY DESK

A two-day conference on sustainable development goals (SDG) ended at United International University yesterday, says a press release.

Institute of Development Studies and Sustainability organised the event where Dr Shamsul Alam, member of General Economic Division of Planning Commission, delivered his speech as chief guest.

Dr Kim van Nieuwaaal, director of Delta Alliance, Netherlands, was keynote speaker. The programme was moderated by Prof Hamidul Haq, director of Institute of Development Studies and Sustainability of UIIU.

Nine held for cheating service seekers at Khulna BRTA

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Detectives of Khulna Metropolitan Police yesterday arrested nine persons over cheating service seekers at Bangladesh Road Transport Authority's (BRTA) regional office in Khulna.

The arrestees are Raihan Hossain, Monjur Ahmed, Sakir Hossain, Md Shahidul Islam, Rahmat, Beg Iqbal, Ashiqur Rahman, Zahidul Islam, and Shiraj Khan.

They were arrested as they took money from people with a false promise to ensure service for them, said Sheikh Moniruzzaman, additional deputy police com-

Two children below five died of pneumonia every hour in 2016: report

UNB, Dhaka

Pneumonia is one of the leading killers of children in Bangladesh as the disease took the lives of over 16,960 children under five years of age in 2016, which is close to two deaths every hour.

Although the overall child death (under five) rate has declined steeply over the last 20 years, the reduction in pneumonia deaths has not had a similar result, according to a recent report published by Save the Children Bangladesh.

However, a recently released United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef) data shows that only 42 percent of children under five with pneumonia symptoms receive care in Bangladesh.

Pneumonia claimed lives of an estimated 880,000 children -- more than malaria and

diarrhoea combined, approximately 16 percent of the 5.6 million under-five deaths in 2016 in the world.

Most of them were less than two years' old. The vast majority of those killed by pneumonia are poor and living in low and middle-income countries.

Bangladesh has a well-structured Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) programme in the existing public healthcare delivery system and good immunisation coverage by introducing the PCV (pneumococcal conjugate vaccine), which can help protect children against leading causes of pneumonia, said the report.

However, there is a gap in preparedness for IMCI service delivery, including availability of IMCI trained providers (54 percent), availability of medicine such as

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Country lacks research-friendly environment: Ghulam Murshid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent researcher and writer Ghulam Murshid yesterday said there is lack of research-friendly environment in the country.

"Vast amounts of materials for research are present in the country. I found rare books at Varendra Research Museum that was not even available at British Museum Library," Murshid said while speaking at "Bidyapeeth Baithaki", an interactive discussion, organised by Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation at its Dhanmondi office in Dhaka.

There are rare books at libraries of Rajshahi University, Rajshahi Government College and elsewhere, he added.

"But there is lack of research-friendly environment in the country. When I was writing 'Bibartanmulak



Researcher and writer Ghulam Murshid, left, in conversation with the audience at Bidyapeeth Baithaki.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangla Obhidhan' published by Bangla Academy, I hardly received cooperation," he said.

Murshid -- a scholar of literature,

history and culture -- has authored books on a range of subjects, including women's studies, Bangla language and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Two youths found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police recovered bodies of two youths from two upazilas in Chattogram district yesterday.

The body of Md Alamgir Hossain, 41, was found from BFDC gate area of Kamaphuli upazila, police said.

The deceased was missing since Monday. The body has been sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) for an autopsy.

Meanwhile, the hanging body of Md Alamgir Ali, 27, was found in an under construction house near his residence in Razoan upazila.

Locals spotted the body and informed the law enforcers, said SI Farhad Hossain of East Gujara Investigation Centre under Razoan Police Station. Two cases were filed over the deaths.



Children being used as jockeys in a horse race in Gowainghat upazila of Sylhet yesterday. There were 33 horses in this daylong race, and every jockey was between the ages of 10 and 12. The children are paid a small amount of money for each race. The Children Act of 2013, which defines anyone under 18 as a child, considers cruelty inflicted on children in both formal and informal work, an offence.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Gas supply resumes in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

After three days of suspension, the authorities of Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Limited started supplying gas in Chattogram yesterday.

The gas supply had remained suspended after an excavator of Chattogram City Corporation mistakenly made a hole in the pipeline during a digging work in Maitteli canal beside Akmal Ali Road on Saturday afternoon.

The key pipeline provides gas to Patenga, Halishahar, Fakir Hat, Agrabad, Chowmuhoni, Dewan Hat, Monsurabad, New Market, Kazir Dewri, Jamalkhan, Sadarghat, Port and EPZ areas, according to the officials.

HC orders report on framing rules for private healthcare facilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know the progress in setting charges and fees at private clinics, hospitals and diagnostic centres, and keeping their charts in public view.

The court also sought a report on framing rules for running private healthcare facilities.

The court ordered the health secretary to submit the progress report by March 5 and fixed March 7 for passing further order on the issue.

The bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam passed the order during hearing of a writ petition filed by Human Rights Lawyers and Securing Environment Society of Bangladesh seeking necessary order so that private healthcare facilities run efficiently.

Following the same petition, the HC on July 24 last year directed private clinics, hospitals and diagnostic centres to publicly display their charges and fees.

Health secretary, director general of the Directorate of Health Services and Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council have been ordered to ask the private hospitals and diagnostic centres to keep their charges and fees in public view place within 15 days of receiving the order.

The HC also asked them to constitute a committee with experts concerned for framing rules as well as policy to monitor the clinics and laboratories in 60 days under the Medical Practice and Private Clinics and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982.

The court also issued a rule asking the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Take steps to resolve rights-related complaints

President tells NHRC

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid yesterday urged the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to take prompt measures for resolving human rights-related complaints.

He said this when an eight-member NHRC delegation, led by its Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque, submitted its annual report-2017 to the president at Bangabhaban.

President Hamid asked NHRC to take quick measures to solve the cases, President's Press Secretary Joynal Abedin told the news agency after the meeting.

The president told the commission that it will have to be more alert to respond to any complaint at the shortest possible time, the press secretary said.

NHRC Chairman Reazul apprised the president of the different activities of the commission.

He said they received 644 complaints in 2017 and resolved 356 of them. NHRC sent the remaining complaints to other authorities concerned for resolving them.

আলু চাষি ভাইয়েরা

আপনি নিজেই আলু সংরক্ষণ করতে ইচ্ছুক? তবে জেনে নিন দেশীয় পদ্ধতিতে আলু সংরক্ষণের সহজ পদ্ধতি

অনেক চাষি ভাই আছেন যারা নিজেরাই আলু সংরক্ষণ করতে ইচ্ছুক অথবা অনেকে মাঠ থেকে আলু সংগ্রহ করার পর হিমাগারে আলু নিয়ে যাওয়ার মধ্যবর্তী সময়ে বিভিন্ন সমস্যার সম্মুখীন হন। এ ধরনের চাষি ভাইদের নিজের পদ্ধতি অনুসরণ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে :

- আলু সংরক্ষণের আগে ভালোভাবে বাছাই করে কাটা, ফাটা, পচা, দাগযুক্ত এবং রোগ-পোকা আক্রান্ত আলুগুলো সরিয়ে ফেলতে হবে;
- আলু সংরক্ষণের জন্য অপেক্ষাকৃত ঠাণ্ডা, সহজে বাতাস চলাচল করে এমন ঘর উত্তম;
- একই ঘরে বিগত বছরে আলু সংরক্ষণ করা হলে এবার প্রথমেই ঘরটি ভালোভাবে পরিষ্কার করে নিতে হবে;
- আলু মাচার সংরক্ষণ করা উত্তম। মাটি বা মেঝে থেকে মাচা এক ফুট উপরে বানাতে হবে এবং একটি মাচা থেকে আরেকটি মাচার দূরত্ব থাকবে ২.৫ থেকে ৩.০ ফুট;
- ঘরের জানালা চওড়া ও বড় হলে ভালো হয় এবং বাতাস চলাচলের জন্য সব সময় খোলা রাখা দরকার;
- সংরক্ষিত আলু খাবারের জন্য ব্যবহৃত হলে সংরক্ষণকালে কোনো ধরনের কীটনাশক ব্যবহার করা উচিত নয়। এর পরিবর্তে নিম বা বিষকটালি বা ল্যান্টিনার গুঁড়ো পাতা আলুর উপরে বিছিয়ে দেয়া যেতে পারে;
- আলু রাখার পর থেকে প্রতি ২০-২৫ দিন পর পর আলুর গাদা পরীক্ষা করে দেখতে হবে। পচা, ভেজা বা কোন রকম রোগ-পোকা আক্রান্ত আলু দেখামাত্র সরিয়ে ফেলতে হবে;
- আলুতে সুতলি পোকা দেখা দিলে সঙ্গে সঙ্গে বাছাই করে অনেক দূরে গর্ত করে গুঁতে ফেলতে হবে।

বিস্তারিত তথ্যের জন্য নিকটস্থ উপসহকারী কৃষি কর্মকর্তা বা উপজেলা কৃষি অফিসে যোগাযোগ করুন। প্রয়োজনে কৃষি কল সেন্টারে ১৬১২৩ নম্বরে কল করুন।

প্রচারে : কৃষি তথ্য সার্ভিস কৃষি মন্ত্রণালয়
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